

UN PERMANENT FORUM FIRST SESSION

Statement and recommendations from IDPADA-G Preparatory Meeting

I speak on behalf of the International Decade for People of African Descent Assembly—Guyana (IDPADA-G) established in 2017 by an assembly of African Guyanese civil society organizations, with the support of the then government, to serve as Guyana’s Country Coordinating Mechanism for the UN Decade for People of African Descent. Sixty-five (65) African Guyanese organizations from across Guyana form IDPADA-G’s General Assembly and focus its work on addressing equitable treatment of and reparative justice for African Guyanese. This intervention draws on a preparatory meeting held on November 20 in which community leaders put forward the concerns they wished to be brought to this body.

The history and politics of the current political regime does not bestow confidence. They have not acknowledged the plight of the African Guyanese and in pursuit of their own interest, largely ethnic, they have shown scant regard for the lives and livelihood of African Guyanese. Extra-judicial killings, corruption and the narco-trade have trumped justice, good governance and legitimate wealth creation.

Under this regime, the member organizations of IDPADA-G are concerned that no specific attention, as the Decade calls for, is being paid to the state of Guyanese of African descent. On the contrary, the policies of the state are further entrenching and escalating the dire state of African descendants in Guyana.

The disproportionately large size of the oil and gas sector in relation to the rest of the nation’s economy, the historically structured inequalities in resource allocation and wealth creation, combined with race-based politics in Guyana have contributed to an exponentially widening economic gap between Africans and others in the Guyanese economy. African Guyanese have been marginalized - - kept out of the oil and gas sector and deprived of significant contracting opportunities, mining, logging and other natural

resource concessions, in addition to being forced out of the public sector and shut out of the private sector in deference to an Indo-Guyanese oligarchy. In two short years, through a ruthless and systematic racist attack on landownership and tenure, mining concessions, employment, contract awards, African Guyanese now control less than 8% of the nation's productive sectors and are being relegated to the margins of Guyana's burgeoning economy.

At the Preparatory meeting, the member organizations jointly crafted the community's message and recommendations to this body to address the issues confronting African communities, and specifically African Guyanese. They recommend the formulation of policies that demand:

ECONOMIC EQUITY – disaggregated data collection and protection of land ownership

Recommendation I: Collection of disaggregated data and/or ethnic disparity audits as the basis for developing policies and programmes targeted at improving the lives of African descendant people

Recommendation II: Special procedures at the level of the UN to ensure the protection of land ownership, compensatory measures for land unjustly dispossessed of and return of land under illegal possession.

EQUAL AND FAIR TREATMENT UNDER THE LAW – Increased Oversight and Monitoring

Recommendation III: The establishment of national oversight and monitoring agencies (in Guyana and other similarly affected states) to ensure government respects the Human Rights of People of African Descent and adheres to all established affirmative action and equity policies.

A video detailing the current status of African Guyanese was launched at our side event on November 30, 2022. It is available to view at: <https://idpada-g.gy/permanentforum/>

A FINAL NOTE ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF IDPADA-G

Each year since 2018, Guyana's Parliament had approved a modest subvention (grant) to support IDPADA-G's work – a grant initiated by the

previous government and continued since 2020 under the new regime. However, in September of this year, without notice or clear cause and in spite of the approved Parliamentary allocation for 2022, the government of Guyana ceased disbursing the monthly payment of the grant funds resulting in the curtailment of the work of IDPADA-G, an organization dedicated to the goals of the Decade. IDPADA-G brings this to the attention of this body and calls on all here present to register support for the continued funding of an agency with a proven record of successful programs focused on achieving the goals of the Decade.

Our community is thankful for the opportunity to bring our plight to the attention of the UN Permanent Forum for People of African Descent.

December 5, 2022

United Nations, Geneva